

## **City of Tacoma**

# **Scope of Work for the 2004 Comprehensive Plan Update**

**(Adopted by the City Council, May 18, 2004, Resolution No. 36179)**

### **What is this document?**

This document summarizes the results of the compliance review of the City's comprehensive plan and development regulations. It identifies those portions of the plan and regulations that need to be revised in order to comply with the State Growth Management Act (GMA), and outlines a process for revisions. The document represents the City's "determination for revisions" fulfilling the first major milestone of the "2004 Update" requirement of GMA (RCW 36.70A.130).

The 2004 Update is partially funded with State funds made available through the State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development, which is a project financier.

### **What is the Comprehensive Plan?**

Tacoma's Comprehensive Plan is the official statement adopted by the City Council setting forth goals and policies to protect the health, welfare, safety and quality of life of Tacoma's residents. The plan expresses a long-range vision of how citizens want their community to look and function in the future. The plan helps to focus, coordinate and direct the many diverse activities of City departments by providing a comprehensive and common vision.

The Comprehensive Plan was first adopted in 1975. It went through a major modification in 1993 to fulfill the requirements of GMA, and has been subsequently amended on an annual basis to keep current and maintain consistency with the State law.

The Comprehensive Plan contains five primary elements mandated by the State law, i.e., land use, housing, capital facilities, utilities and transportation. The Comprehensive Plan also contains general elements that address citywide issues, subarea elements that focus on a neighborhood or a specialized geographic area, as well as implementation programs that identify actions and projects to carry out the goals and policies.

### **What are development regulations?**

Development regulations are controls placed on the development and use of land. They include zoning regulations, which manage the location and intensity of uses, and critical areas regulations, which protect wetlands, streams, aquifer recharge areas, fish and wildlife habitats, frequently flooded areas, and geological hazard areas. Development regulations are a means to carry out the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

## **What were reviewed?**

The following GMA-required elements of the comprehensive plan and the development regulations were reviewed:

1. Generalized Land Use Plan
2. Housing Plan
3. Capital Facilities Plan and Program
4. Utilities Plan
5. Transportation Plan and Program
6. Environmental Policy Plan
7. Other plan elements not required by GMA
8. Critical Areas Preservation Regulations
9. Zoning Regulations
10. Other development regulations

## **What are the findings?**

Since the Comprehensive Plan mandated by GMA was adopted in 1993, amendments have been made on an annual basis to maintain the consistency with GMA and the internal consistency among its elements. Additional elements such as the Tacoma Dome Area Plan and the Economic Development Plan were developed and adopted to enhance the applicability of the Comprehensive Plan in the respective subject areas.

Various development regulations have been updated on an as-needed basis. The most significant effort is the update of the City's Zoning Code, which is a multi-year process initiated in 2000. The goal is to simplify the code, streamline the regulatory process, meet the evolving needs of the development community and citizens, and more importantly, ensure consistency with GMA and the Comprehensive Plan.

The Zoning Code Update has accomplished Phase I (revisions to the commercial regulations; adopted by the City Council Ordinance No. 26933, March 5, 2002) and Phase II (revisions to the industrial regulations; adopted by the City Council Ordinance No. 27079, April 29, 2003), and is currently in the 3<sup>rd</sup> phase – residential zoning code update. The primary objective of Phase III is to incorporate reasonable measures to achieve densities envisioned in the Comprehensive Plan, fulfilling the Buildable Lands requirements of GMA.

Additionally, Neighborhood Action Strategies have been developed for the 8 Neighborhood Council areas. The action strategies are intended to customize the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan at the neighborhood level. Subsequent land use assessments are conducted for each neighborhood area, resulting in relevant amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and development regulations. Land use assessments have been completed for the Central and the Northeast Tacoma Neighborhood Council areas in the 2003 annual amendment process. Three more neighborhood areas are scheduled for 2004, i.e., South Tacoma, North End and West End.

Overall, the City's Comprehensive Plan and development regulations remain consistent with GMA. However, the Critical Areas Preservation Ordinance should be revised to comply with the requirements of GMA specifically relative to the incorporation of Best Available Science. Other

key issues, including modifications to policies where needed, in various elements of the Comprehensive Plan should also be addressed.

More detailed reporting on the compliance review, element-by-element, is presented below.

#### Land Use Element:

The Generalized Land Use Plan was adopted in 1993 as the land use element of the Comprehensive Plan. The plan adopts the mixed-use centers concept and outlines goals and policies to achieve orderly, timely, desirable and planned growth and development. Amendments have been made on an annual basis concentrating on changes to the Generalized Land Use Intensity Map.

Key land use issues in 2004 Update:

- Population projections should be updated to reflect the recently adopted population allocation by the Pierce County Council.
- New policies on accessory dwelling units should be considered to provide additional guidance.
- Consider policies on lot area.
- Revise policies for historic preservation and add maps of historic districts.
- Revise all maps to indicate County designated and City proposed UGA boundaries.
- Add text and maps pertaining to the regional urban growth and manufacturing/industrial centers.
- Clarify relationships between land use intensity and zoning classifications.
- Modify plan amendment description for consistency with Tacoma Municipal Code Chapter 13.02 relative to Planning Commission procedures.
- Review policies and regulations for incompatible uses adjacent to general aviation airports.

#### Housing Element:

The Housing Plan focuses on the general and specific areas of housing preservation, new housing development, expanded housing opportunities and housing planning and coordination. An assessment of housing conditions, specific housing types (e.g., public housing) and an analysis of housing affordability are included in the Housing Program.

In addition, the City prepares the 5-year Consolidated Plan for Housing and Community Development, as well as the associated annual action plans, pursuant to the requirements of the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development. The Consolidated Plan represents a primary tool for implementation of the affordable housing goals and policies.

The housing element focuses on the need to achieve for all citizens sound, safe, healthful and attractive housing within a suitable living environment, in their choice of location and living modes. Review of the current housing policies and strategies indicates that they are still in line with that intent.

Key housing issues in 2004 Update:

- Projections on housing needs and conditions should be updated based on 2000 Census data.
- The countywide methodology for fair share distribution using 1990 Census showed Tacoma providing more than its fair share of affordable housing. An updated countywide analysis is needed based on 2000 Census data.

Capital Facilities Element:

The capital facilities element consists of the Capital Facilities Plan that was adopted in 1993 and the 6-year Capital Facilities Program that was adopted in 1993 and amended annually ever since. The plan contains policies and strategies addressing such issues as adequate public facilities and services, funding, programming, maintenance, economic development and neighborhood revitalization, and location and design. The program contains an inventory of existing and proposed capital facilities, forecast of future needs, actions to meet deficiencies if any, and a six-year financing plan.

The Capital Facilities Program is amended annually, primarily to keep the information current. The Capital Facilities Plan was amended once in 1998. The amendment deleted the level of service standards (LOS) for municipal parking facilities and municipal community service buildings; modified the LOS for transit, schools, sanitary sewer, law enforcement, potable water, and roads; and clarified the LOS for emergency medical service, Beltline Railroad and electric utilities.

Key capital facilities issue in 2004 Update:

- Evaluate level of service standards and revise where appropriate.

Utilities Element:

The Utilities Plan adopted in 1993 contains policies to achieve the goal of providing an optimum utility facilities and services that meet the community's current and future needs in a reliable, effective, efficient, economic and environmentally responsible manner. There are policies that address general issues such as growth and development, planning coordination, system location and design, utility corridors, and urban growth areas. There are also policies that address specific utilities including electric, natural gas, sanitary sewer, solid waste, storm drainage, telecommunications, and water.

No policy is inconsistent with GMA. However, some deletion and addition may be needed to reflect changes to utility services since 1993, such as the creation of the Click! Telecommunications Network and the reorganization of the Rail Division of Tacoma Public Utilities.

Key utilities issues in 2004 Update:

- Text and policies regarding Click! Network may be added.

- Text and policies may need revisions pertaining to Tacoma Public Utilities' rail service, although there are already policies in the transportation element that speak to multimodal systems.

#### Transportation Element:

The transportation element includes the 1993 Transportation Plan, the Transportation Program (last amended in 2002), the 1995 Nonmotorized Transportation Plan, and the Commute Trip Reduction Plan and Ordinance (last amended in 1998). In addition, there is a Six-Year Comprehensive Transportation Program that is prepared annually under a separate State law requirement (RCW 35.77.010) to implement the goals and policies of the Transportation Plan.

The Transportation Plan consists of policies focusing on the subject areas of land use and transportation integration, multimodal systems, environmental protection, funding and financing, and citizen involvement. These policies are found to remain consistent with the intent of GMA and the Puget Sound Regional Council's VISION 2020.

#### Key transportation issues in 2004 Update:

- Provision of the level of service standards for Highways of Statewide Significance and regionally significant highways, based on guidelines provided by the Washington State Department of Transportation.
- Update to the inventory of the multimodal systems.
- Ensure consistency with Destination 2030: Metropolitan Transportation Plan for the Central Puget Sound Region.

#### Environmental Policy Plan

The Environmental Policy Plan, adopted in 1992, addresses environmental issues and concerns and provides a logical and reasonable basis for evaluating the impacts of development on the natural environment and providing alternative development standards. It contains policies addressing general government, natural features, growth and development, recreation and open space, energy, residential land use, air quality, noise, water quality, scenic areas, storm water runoff, and solid waste and recycling. It also contains specific policies addressing two major areas of GMA concern: critical areas and natural resource lands.

#### Key environmental issues in 2004 Update:

- Policies relative to the critical areas may need to be revised in accordance with proposed revisions to the Critical Areas Preservation Ordinance.
- Policies relative to recreation and open space should be further reviewed to ensure consistency with the Recreation and Open Space Facilities Plan, adopted in 2000.

#### Other Elements:

There are several new or revised elements of the Comprehensive Plan that were adopted within the past few years, as shown below. These elements are still consistent with GMA and no further revisions are needed.

- **Destination Downtown**, adopted in 1999 and last amended in 2001, representing the subarea plan for Downtown Tacoma
- **Recreation and Open Space Facilities Plan**, adopted in 2000, replacing the 1994 Recreation and Open Space Facilities Plan
- **Tacoma Dome Area Plan**, adopted in 2001, replacing the 1995 Tacoma Dome Area Plan and representing the subarea plan for the Tacoma Dome area
- **Economic Development Plan**, adopted in 2001, replacing the 1993 Economic Development Plan and the 1995-2001 Economic Development Program
- **Neighborhood Element**, adopted in 1999 and last amended in 2003, providing neighborhood vision and policies for eight neighborhood areas

#### Critical Areas Preservation Ordinance:

The City's critical areas preservation ordinance (CAPO), codified in Tacoma Municipal Code Chapter 13.11, is intended to protect the public health, safety and welfare by establishing provisions to classify, protect and preserve Tacoma's critical areas. The CAPO addresses aquifer recharge areas, fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas, flood hazard areas, geologically hazard areas, stream corridors, wetlands, and buffer zones.

There are other chapters of the Municipal Code that address critical areas related issues, such as Chapters 13.10 Shoreline Management, 13.12 Environmental Code, 12.08 Surface Water Manual, and 2.12 Flood Hazard and Coastal High Hazard Areas.

City staff is currently in the process of preparing a map portfolio, best available science bibliography, CAPO code audit, and shoreline inventory. The research efforts, along with feedback received from the public later in the process, are expected to suggest specific revisions to the CAPO.

#### Key critical areas issues in 2004 Update:

- Incorporation of the best available science which may result in changes to regulations for wetland buffers, erosion hazard areas, flood hazard areas, landslide hazard areas, South Tacoma Groundwater Protection District, gulches, steep slope vegetation and development, and aquifer recharge areas.
- Special consideration to the preservation or enhancement of anadromous fisheries.

#### Other Development Regulations:

As mentioned previously, the City is in the process of updating the residential zoning regulations, which is the 3<sup>rd</sup> phase of the Zoning Code Update. Revisions to the industrial and commercial codes (Phases I and II) have been completed. The City has also reviewed and revised its plan amendment procedures for consistency with public notice and participation requirements. In addition, the Environmental Code (Tacoma Municipal Code Chapter 13.12), which provides the process and procedures for conducting environmental review, will be revised to reflect past amendments to GMA and to the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA).

## **What other changes will be considered in 2004?**

- In addition to those issues as described in the findings that should be considered as part of the 2004 Update, other issues will be addressed as part of the annual amendment process for 2004 which will be carried out concurrently with the 2004 Update. To date, the City has identified the following as possible amendments in 2004. Other amendments may be added if privately initiated applications are received by the March 31, 2004 deadline.
- Consider policies on fair and equitable distribution of registered sex offenders.
- Review wetlands in the city for possible designation as a wetland of local significance consistent with the criteria and process established by the Washington State Department of Ecology.
- Update policy plans for the North End, South Tacoma and West End areas. Revisions may include changes to the Generalized Land Use Intensity Map and area-wide zoning reclassifications.
- Review a proposed change to the zoning designations on the north side of South 7<sup>th</sup> Street between Union and Puget Sound avenues. The Planning Commission deferred action on this 2003 amendment proposal to this year.
- Consider a review of policies and regulations concerning fair share distribution of housing, services and facilities for high risk/high needs individuals, such as offender populations, mentally ill and those recovering from substance abuse.
- Review consistency of North Slope Historic District with zoning classifications and Comprehensive Plan designations.

In addition to the revisions proposed for the 2004 Update and as may be proposed for the 2004 annual amendments, the City intends to take the opportunity to consolidate the Comprehensive Plan that currently consists of many stand-alone documents into one document. This consolidation and reformatting effort will take years to complete. The effort in itself does not alter the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan, and hence is independent to the 2004 Update and annual amendments. However, those elements of the Comprehensive Plan that are being reformatted will replace the existing ones respectively, and therefore are brought forward along with the 2004 Update to the City Council for approval.

## **What is the timeline?**

The Work Program for Revisions is scheduled to go through the review and approval processes before the Planning Commission and the City Council during the February-May 2004 timeline. The City Council's determination for revisions is anticipated to occur in mid-May.

The Planning Commission will conduct the revisions throughout the summer and make a recommendation to the City Council in September. The City Council is anticipated to conduct its review and approval through November. In addition, annual amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and development regulations that are requested by public or private entities will be processed, as in the past, and considered along with the 2004 Update packet.

The following table depicts the main tasks and the timeline. The dates reflect staff's best estimate at this time and are subject to change.

<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Tasks</b>
February 18	Planning Commission review of the Work Program for Revisions
March 17	Planning Commission public hearing on the Work Program for Revisions
April 7	Planning Commission discussion of hearing testimony and possible modifications
April 21	Planning Commission recommendation on the Work Program for Revisions
May 11	City Council study session and public hearing on the Work Program for Revisions
May 18	City Council adoption by resolution of the Work Program for Revisions
April – July	Planning Commission review of (a) draft revisions as per 2004 Update requirements, including revisions to the Critical Areas Preservation Ordinance, and (b) draft annual amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and development regulations that are proposed by public and/or private applicants.
September 1	Planning Commission public hearing on draft 2004 Update and annual amendments
September 15	Planning Commission discussion of hearing testimony and possible modifications
October 6	Planning Commission recommendation on draft 2004 Update and annual amendments
October 19	City Council study session on draft 2004 Update and annual amendments
October 26	City Council public hearing on draft 2004 Update and annual amendments
November 9	City Council first reading of draft 2004 Update and annual amendments
November 16	City Council adoption of draft 2004 Update and annual amendments
November 30	Submit to State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development

## **How can citizens get involved?**

Citizens are encouraged to actively participate in the project by attending meetings of the Planning Commission and the City Council, working with their respective Neighborhood Councils to discuss issues and formulate recommendations as appropriate, visiting the City's website, or contacting planning staff.

### Planning Commission:

The Planning Commission is designated by the Tacoma Municipal Code as the responsible citizen panel for advising the City Council on comprehensive plan and land use issues. Accordingly, the Commission will be the primary source of public involvement in guiding the 2004 Update. The Growth Management Division of the Tacoma Economic Development Department provides staff support to the Commission. All Commission meetings are open to the public and interested community members are welcome to attend.



#### Public Hearings:

Public hearings will be conducted by the Planning Commission and City Council. This will include opportunities for written comments.

#### Public Meetings:

In addition to the Planning Commission's meetings and hearings, general public meetings may be held at key project milestones for the public to provide feedback and suggestions. Focus groups may be conducted, if needed, to accommodate certain community interests in selected elements of the comprehensive plan. Staff will also pursue outreach efforts with the Neighborhood Councils, business district associations, other community groups and interested parties.

#### Web Page:

The Tacoma Economic Development Department maintains a web page on comprehensive planning ([www.cityoftacoma.org/54CompPlan](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/54CompPlan)), which is an effective means for the public to follow the 2004 Update and provide comments as desired. The web page also provides information on the Planning Commission ([www.cityoftacoma.org/54CompPlan/PCWelcome.htm](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/54CompPlan/PCWelcome.htm)), including agendas and minutes of meetings.

### **Who to contact for more information?**

For more information, please contact the following staff at the Tacoma Economic Development Department:

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